

# THE NEW FOREST



Pictured by Ernest Haslehust  
Described by Elizabeth Godfrey

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GIPSES AT COLHAPPOUR

# THE NEW FOREST

**Described by Elizabeth Godfrey**

**Pictured by E. W. Haslehust**



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In these modern days, when towns are increasing on every side, and the new idea of garden cities threatens to swallow up what little is left us of the true country, it is good to remember that in one quiet corner of Hampshire lies a sanctuary, a little region set apart with its own laws and customs for over eight centuries for the preservation of wild life.

In our childhood we were taught to look upon the deed of Norman William with horror, as an iniquity perpetrated by an inhuman conqueror, and we spouted in the words of good Miss Smedley:

"Oh Forest! green New Forest! Home of the bird and breeze,  
With all thy soft and sweeping glades, and long, dim aisles  
of trees,  
Like some ancestral palace thou standest proud and fair;  
Yet is each tree a monument to death and wild despair."

Now we have come to bless his name as one of the greatest of our benefactors. Moreover, the scientific historian has been at work, and has completely demolished the legend. The serious student may be referred to Wise's *History of the New Forest*, where he will find the evidence thoroughly sifted; for this slight story it will be enough to gather up the results. To begin with, the Saxon name of Ytene, by which the district was known before it became the New Forest, denotes a furzy waste, as much of it is to this day—"hungry uplands and marshy valleys"—and the fact that, although traces of Roman occupation are found on the borders, and Roman roads seem to have crossed it, no Roman villa has been unearthed within its precincts, goes far to prove that this could have been no smiling land of plenty, or the invaders would surely have settled in a spot lying so handy to the seacoast. Buckland Camp, on its southern confines near Lymington, shows that they had it in possession, and to this stronghold the British general, Natan Leod, fell back when driven from Calshot Castle by the Saxons. His Roman name of Ambrosius is found in Ampress Farm hard by.

Probably Canute, who had his capital at Winchester, and was much at Southampton, had a chase here, for he, like Norman William, was a mighty hunter, as the stringency of his forest laws testifies.

Regarding the size and nature of the district, neither churches nor villages could have been much more numerous than at the present day, and as some of the former, still standing, are mentioned in "Domesday Book", the wholesale destruction of the old Chronicles must have been grossly exaggerated. When William annexed the district to the Crown, he most likely chose it because the greater part was wild already, and the afforestation simply meant that he placed it under forest law with a separate administration. Cases of hardship there doubtless were; though there is record of compensation being paid to some dispossessed owners, the smaller men may have suffered, and these being Saxons, bitter feeling against the Conqueror was engendered, and as time went on tales of cruelty grew to legends, especially after the violent deaths of William's sons in the forest, held by the common people to be the judgment of God.

The whole tract taken by the king was about the size of the Isle of Wight, a triangle, roughly speaking, lying between Southampton Water on the east and the River Avon on the west, its base being the Solent shore, and its apex running up into Wiltshire at Nomansland. Since then its boundaries have been narrowed, passing a mile or two within Southampton Water, from Cadnam through Dibden purlieu, touching the Solent at Stone Point and

leaving it again at Pitt's Deep, cutting the Lymington Road at Passford, and going by Meadend Bridge round by the Avon Valley, along the rampart of high down to Breamore, where it joins the old northern border. It has been further diminished by the grant of manors to private owners and to Beaulieu Abbey, and by encroachments of various sorts.

To the town-dweller forest usually bears the prime signification of trees; he thinks of a forest as a wood of large extent, interrupted possibly by an occasional clearing: to the forester it means a great tract of moorland, holding in its bosom many wooded enclosures, many "lawns", as he calls the lightly wooded slopes, many long, marshy "bottoms" or valleys dividing the heaths. The dictionary meaning is just open ground reserved for the chase, and the derivation is given as *foras*: out of doors.

The two prime interests of the forest were "venison and vert"—deer for the chase and wood for the dockyard—and for the due administration of these a Lord Warden was appointed, usually a nobleman, sometimes a royal prince, and under him two Rangers, one for each branch of Forest Law. The fifteen Walks into which the Forest was, and is still, divided were placed under fifteen Keepers, men of position who inhabited the forest lodges—"elegant mansions", according to Mr. Gilpin. Under them

again were the Groom-keepers, whose duty it was to browse the deer, to harbour a fat buck for the chase, to impound and mark the cattle and ponies, and to present offenders at the Swainmote, whether deer-stealers or encroachers on forest land. They had an old distich for their guidance in the former case:

“Stable stand; dog draw;  
Back bear and bloody hand”.

This meant that a man found lurking in a suspicious position, or one with a dog pursuing a stricken deer, one carrying a carcass or with blood on his hands, was liable to be haled before the Swainmote, charged with deer-stealing.

A Woodward, with ten Regarders under him, saw to the planting, cutting, and preservation of the timber, and also assigned wood and peat to those who enjoyed chimney rights. It is interesting to find these rights extended to the forests of northern France by Henry of Lancaster after those victories which caused him to arrogate to himself and his successors the title of “Rex Angliæ et Franciæ”. Some of these wood rights were limited to the dead wood a man could reach with a crooked stick: hence the expression, “by hook or by crook”. A Purveyor was also appointed on behalf of Portsmouth Dockyard to claim the timber needed for His Majesty’s ships.

Besides these officials, six Verderers were chosen by the freeholders and one by the king to sit in the Swainmote and uphold Forest rights.

Now, since it has become the property of the Crown instead of the king—quite a different thing—the administration has been altered and the officials are much fewer: it has been placed under the Department of Woods and Forests, represented by a Deputy Surveyor, but the Verderers still meet six times a year at the King's House to maintain the rights of the commoners.

And now the two main objects of the afforestation have nearly come to an end: neither venison nor vert are of their old importance. The deer had encroached so much on the foresters' rights, that their extinction was decreed; a few yet linger in the north and west, but the Forest is no longer for them. Moreover, since we have ceased to trust in the "wooden walls of Old England", the demand for sound oak timber is shrinking, and once in the utilitarian days of the last century it was seriously proposed to throw the whole district open for cultivation. Happily there were enough lovers of nature to save it, and it is still preserved as a bit of the wild country our forefathers enjoyed.

For the Forest has a peculiar charm which I would fain convey. Where does it lie? Just where it is



least sought; where the cheap tripper complains there is nothing to see. Not by Rufus' Stone; not in the drear formality of the Ornamental Drive; hardly under the big trees where picnic parties leave their sandwich papers and banana skins: rather where the brown rivulet winds its hidden way between the rushes; beside the dark pool lying in the hollow of the moor with deep, shadowy reflections of its fringe of trees and just a glint of blue sky between; or along the green rides where the wood seems endless; or on the high shoulder of the wide, lonely moor, sloping away, fold beyond fold, to the distant sea, with all its wondrous changeful hues, bronze and russet with bracken, purple with heather, with sweeps of ling tenderly grey—yet most beautiful, perhaps, when the amethyst dusk has swallowed up all shades, and the dark crest lies against the fading glow of sunset. The palpitating song of the lark, that all day filled the sky with music, is hushed, and the tawny owls, with their soft flight like huge moths, swoop across, calling to each other with their long tu-whoo.

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## BROCKENHURST AND THE MOORLAND

Instead of beginning with Lyndhurst in the middle of the Forest, as most Forest books do, and branching out thence like a starfish, it has seemed good to me to take first Brockenhurst, not only because at its big junction many travellers arrive, but because in its infinite variety it shows more of the characteristic features of the land. There is the open Forest stretching away, with its wide views and its silver border of sea, with its marshy hollows and crested heights; there is the Boldre—*Byldwr*, or full stream—gliding through meadow and thicket till it becomes the broad Lymington River and meets the tide between the marshes; there are the deep green woods of the manor climbing up from the riverside to meet other woods at Ladycross, or opening out on the uplands at Heathy Dilton; and, lastly, the village is still full of interest and old-world corners, though, alas! threatened with development into villadom at the Rise and beyond.

Hard by the station, on a bare plot of ground, once a small village green, stands the smithy at the meet-



E. W. HALL, HART.



ing of the ways. It bears date 1540, and from the reign of Henry VIII till that of Edward VII a Masters shod the horses of travellers at this spot; now it has passed into other hands. Just beyond the forge a low-browed workshop and thatched cottage used to stand a little back from the road, where Mr. Pope and his forebears for many generations—one may say for many centuries—practised a unique industry, the making of hobby horses, for which the district has been famed time out of mind. The little old premises with precious store of wood were burnt in a disastrous fire one Christmas night; but the old business is still carried on, though in new quarters, and still the traveller may see in the station yard piles upon piles of these conventional steeds of exactly the same pattern, beloved of our ancestors in their childhood, straight-bodied, straight-legged, standing on four little wheels, so as to be dragged along by a string, each adorned with a narrow strip of fur nailed along his neck to represent a mane, and brightened with daubs of red or blue paint, laid on with just the traditional touch. They go forth in their hundreds—north, south, east, and west—to find a market; so the children must love them still, and have not grown too sophisticated to find joy in their crude suggestion.

As we go up the village we note, with a sigh, how fast new shops are ousting old thatched cottages,

and new names replacing the old, though still one, Purkess, said to be the lineal descendant of the charcoal burner who conveyed the body of the slain king to Winchester, carries on a long-established grocery business.

Brockenhurst is hardly so much one village as a bundle of hamlets loosely tied together, rejoicing in such names as Shark's Island, Gulliver's Town, or the Weirs. Even the parish church is not in the village, but stands alone on a knoll at the edge of the park, nearly a mile away; but then it has only of late years been made a parish church, having existed anciently as a chantry chapel, probably a timber or wattled structure. Portions of the present building, the nave and the beautiful south door, date from the twelfth century. The Early English chancel is a later addition, and very much later is the north aisle with its prim Georgian windows. It is thought the dedication to St. Peter was made either when it was rebuilt in stone or when the chancel was added. About the end of the eleventh century it was placed under the charge of the vicar of Boldre, and after the Reformation it remained attached to Boldre as a chapel-of-ease, served by the same vicar until 1866, when it was made into a separate ecclesiastical parish, the advowson being sold by John Peyto Shrubbs to John Morant of Brockenhurst Park.

Though regrettable modern patchwork has marred the simple beauty of its lines as approached from the village, yet, seen from the shady lane on the other side, the little church is still delightful, seeming to crouch down into its crowded graveyard with its high-shouldered gables and its quaint steeple, surmounted by the traditional weathercock. By the gate stands an historic yew, and another hollow trunk is carefully shored up, showing scarce a sign of life amidst its shrouding ivy. Big trees stand round, and about the grassy margins of the lane the little rabbits nibble, scurrying away at the approach of the early worshipper.

The road follows the park paling, and at one point a double avenue gives a fine view of the house, much of which was rebuilt in Georgian style in the early part of the last century. Though stately, the front is far less picturesque than the older portion facing the gardens. These are a marvel of topiary art, with pleached alleys, arches, and columns, not of yew merely, but of the far less tractable hornbeam.

That Brockenhurst Manor, or the nucleus of it, existed before the afforestation is attested by an entry in "Domesday Book": "The same Alvic holds a hide in Broceste. His father and uncle held it in parage. It was then assessed at one hide, now at half a hide. There is land for one plough. . . . There is a church and wood worth twenty swine."

This mention of the church raises an interesting point. Recent writers have referred it to Brockenhurst church, but since Boldre, of equal antiquity, stands contiguous to the Manor of Brockenhurst—the Broceste of “Domesday”—and was for centuries the parish church of Brockenhurst as well as of Boldre Bridge, Pilley Street and Pilley Bailey, East End, East Boldre, Lymington, and Sway, it is more likely this is the one specified, whereas that at Brockenhurst was merely a chantry attached to Boldre. In Dugdale’s *Monasticon*, vi. 304, is this entry: “Richard de Redvers, who died in 1107, confirmed to the Priory of Christchurch, Twyneham, the church of Boldre with the chapel of Brockenhurst. This confirmation was repeated by his son, Baldwin, Earl of Devon, and by Henry (de Blois) Bishop of Winchester.” In 1291, by which time a vicarage had been ordained, the church of Boldre with a chapel was assessed at £21, 6s. 8d., a pension to the Priory being chargeable as compensation for tithes. The extent of the parish is suggested by the saying that the blue lungwort with red buds, called by the country folk “Joseph and Mary”, is found only in Boldre parish. Rare elsewhere, it grows freely in the south of the Forest, most of which was comprised in that parish.

Beyond Brockenhurst Park the wide moor stretches southward to Shirley Holms, westward till it merges





SQUATTER'S COTTAGE



in the high plateau of Sway Common and meets the crest of Setthorns. North and east, Hinchelsey Moor slopes down to the bogs that fringe the Weirs. The name of this straggling line of squatters' dwellings has caused much speculation, since of weir there is no trace, nor any water beyond ditch and bogland. Some have been driven to the supposition of a wire fence dividing manor and forest, but the name is old, and wire fencing is not. Possibly the derivation from *Wer*, A.S., shelter or defence (German, *Wehr*), may apply to refuge sought by outlaw squatters. The *New Century Dictionary* gives also "dikes", and as ditches abound on both sides, this seems the most likely. Old inhabitants say that before the digging of these ditches the district was so marshy, so haunted, not by fever and ague only, but by will-o'-the-wisp and colt-pixy, that it got called "the Weird", subsequently corrupted into Weirs (pronounced "wires").

Shorn of much of its beauty by the disastrous burning of 1908, the great moor has still the charm of space, of long lines of distance only hemmed in by the blue hills above the Needles, and of an infinite play of colour. The average lover of the picturesque fancies a moor is brown all over alike. Let him stand here on the height and try to count the hues. The glory of the furze will take some time yet to recover,

but already the ground gorse creeps about with trickles of pale gold, and the heather spreads a rich crimson mantle over the blackness, the true purple of kings. Later comes the silvery bloom of the ling. The grass alone, poor and sparse as it is, has a gamut of tints, through dull green and hay colour to ash grey, and in the wet places are streaks of vivid emerald. The short growth of bracken that clothes every rise is amber and bronze and russet, and in the rain quite red. In the hollows spring bog-myrtle and sun-dew, sheets of cotton-grass lie like shining pools, and in certain favoured spots lurk the buckbean and shy blue gentian.

No fear of losing the way on this stretch of forest, for from every side may be seen the lofty, slender shaft of Arnewood Tower, looking like a watch tower, and known in the country round as "Petersen's Folly". Popular legend connects it with the Swedenborgian tenets held by Mr. Petersen, and various tales are told to account for its building. It is said he intended it to bear an ever-burning light, but the Board of Trade forbade this lest it might throw ships out in their reckoning, so it stands forlorn and purposeless, useful only as a beacon to wayfarers by land.

Leaving the high moor on the eastern side, a rough forest track descends through dense pinewoods, haunt of squirrel and woodpecker. In winter, sheltered from

the wind that sweeps above, there is a hushed stillness; but so soon as the spring sunshine has called the little red, furry folk from their beds, one hears a continual light patter of pine cones dropped between the needles, and earlier than the cuckoo's call echoes the strident laughter of the yaffle. There is a singular feature about this wood: composed for the most part of young, ugly, and too thickly planted trees in rows painfully straight, in the midst occur rings of fine old pines irregularly planted and surrounded by a bank, their lofty wide-spreading tops rising above the rest of the wood and forming what is locally known as a "hat". About them the bracken rises breast high, its tender green catching blue lights in summer, no less lovely when winter rains have reddened its rust colour to match with the red tree trunks.

At the foot of the hill by the river stands a gabled house, a short alley of cypress and Irish yew leading to its deep porch. This is Roydon, by some spelt "Royden", and interpreted as "the rough ground"; but seeing that its green pastures by the river are less rough than most parts, the sense *Roi don*, "the king's gift", is to be preferred. For it was granted by Henry III to Netley Abbey, and, reverting to the Crown at the Dissolution, was bestowed upon John Cook, a "friend" of Cromwell, probably as compensation for some subservient act of surrender. At his

death, in 1587, it was acquired by the Knapton family, who held the Manor of Broceste from 1582 to 1700. In 1771 it was bought by Mr. Edward Morant, and re-united to the Brockenhurst property. In one of the older rooms a stone is let into the wall bearing the initials W. H., G. N., and E. D., and the date 1692. A piece of embroidery is still preserved in the family signed "Anna Knapton, Roydon Manor, 1685". For a quarter of a century the house was in the occupation of Mr. Hooker, appropriately named Sylvester, and in his time its pleasant rooms received many guests, notably that delightful writer, Mr. W. H. Hudson, who immortalized it in his *Hampshire Days*. Since then the alley, not pleasing modern taste, has been reduced to six decapitated stumps.

Along the stream lie fields lush with meadow-sweet and purple loose-strife, and the upper reaches are the haunt of the otter. Another small, wild animal may sometimes be met with on the uplands between Roydon and the moor. Not long ago I spied, scudding away at a rapid trot, what looked like a queer little grey dog with almost no ears and a bald head, by which last I recognized the shy badger.

The other side the river Boldre church stands on a hill, wrapped about in woodland solitude, far from all its many villages. About a mile beyond, on Vicar's



BOLDFE BRIDGE





Hill, lies the pleasant vicarage, in which a century ago Mr. Gilpin passed his placid days and wrote his *Picturesque Scenery of the New Forest*. He was something of a dilettante, and modern readers may now and then smile at his rigid canons of Taste—as it was understood in the eighteenth century. He is very severe upon the beech tree, and one cannot help suspecting that it annoyed him by refusing to blend with his style of sylvan landscape. But he loved the often-unappreciated country along the shore, and for this may be forgiven much. In the garden still stands the mighty plane tree which he reckoned the oldest in England.

Of his Charity School in the little cottage where the daffodils grow, between Boldre Bridge and Pilley Street, nothing survives but the name—Gilpin's Cottage—to keep his memory green. Not long before his death he indited a quaint little pamphlet, recording his wishes for its management. It deserves to be preserved for its sound good sense, though, to be sure, its provisions seem a little out-of-date to-day. Only the three R's are contemplated, and of arithmetic the first four rules alone were to be taught to the boys, while for the girls neither sums nor writing were held needful; reading, with needle-work and housewifery, were enough for a woman. Clothes as well as learning were supplied. To our

modern notions one pair of stockings a year for each child seems a meagre allowance, till we recollect that shoes and stockings would only be worn on Sunday.

In his time the Foresters seem to have been a lawless race, and their lives rough and hard; but nowadays one happy feature of life in the Forest is the comparative prosperity of its poor. Many own their cottages, being descended from squatters, and to most of the older dwellings are attached Forest rights, comprising from one to ten loads of fuel, either peat or firewood, liberty to turn out cattle or ponies for a nominal fee, geese or donkeys free, and "pannage" for pigs—that is, leave to browse in the enclosures in the season of acorn and beechmast. These advantages are known as "chimney rights", and are closely connected with the hearthstone. In old days, when lawless or landless men often sought refuge in the Forest, a custom grew up that an encroacher who already had a roof on and a fire burning on his hearth could no longer be dispossessed; so often a hovel of sods, heather-thatched, was put up in a night and the claim established. Straggling hamlets of this kind sprang up usually on the border of a manor, as at the Weirs, at Beaulieu Rails (properly Royal, being Crown land), and at Hilltop. Now solid cottages in most cases replace the hovels, and some have got into the hands of the jerrybuilder,

with lamentable results. The almost complete disappearance of the heather thatch is much to be regretted: it makes a splendid roofing, as impervious to heat and cold as straw, and its rich brown colour tones in wonderfully with the moorland landscape, especially when wet with winter fog and rain.

I have heard the Forester criticized as "independent". Why should he not be? He works when he needs, often for himself, and there is a dignity about him, and a determination to stand upon his ancient rights; he would rather give than take, and he would be affronted if you offered payment for his little gifts of sloes, of honey, or of "musharoons". The special forest industries are disappearing; the last charcoal burner's hut is really only preserved as a curiosity. You rarely see the gipsies platting mats or baskets, though there is an old man who still goes round, and sits by the roadside, reseating your old chairs with cane or rushes.

One of the favourite camping grounds of the gipsies is a crest of moor, fringed with Scotch firs, called Coldharbour, a name accounted for by some as *Col d'arbres*, "the ridge or neck of trees". It may well be, for the pines are a striking feature, very old and in their grouping very lovely, shorn by the prevailing winds into harmonious curves, bending away from the sea; for over Setley Plain the sea

winds sweep, and often the sea mists too. Lifting my eyes from my writing, I can see as many as three caravans drawn up in the shade, for it is fair-time, and the spot, but just aside from the high road, affords a night's shelter to these nomads who travel from fair to fair, pasture too for their horses, and water from a pond formed at the bottom of an old gravel pit just below.

It is generally the vanners who come to this spot, vagrants rather than true gipsies ("Diddyki", the Romany calls them), and untidy in their leavings, which the genuine gipsy seldom is. These prefer to set up their snug little tents in the thicket of the Brake just across the plain. Here I have found a young mother with an infant of days in a tent on hoops, not much larger than a gig-umbrella, a fire hard by in a bell tent with a hole at the top. Going to pay a call with a pink flannel to wrap the baby in, I found mother and child warm, happy, and content, the former rejoicing in the permission accorded, under these circumstances, of a stay of two weeks. Once I ventured to condole with a gipsy woman on wild wintry weather in such a tent. She tossed back her jet-black plaits: "Oh, I likes it, my dear; I'm used to it, ye see".

If by nothing else, the gipsy may be distinguished from the ordinary tramp by his cheerful insouciant

outlook on life, as well as a sense of humour not yet quenched by the Missioner, the Board School, and the perpetual harass of having to move on. These three factors, especially the second, tend to stamp out the gipsy as a race apart, or to make of him a very unsatisfactory low-class vagrant—a poor exchange. Unhappily the Missioner is rarely content to bring religion to the gipsy and leave him a gipsy still. He must needs try and induce him to abandon his way of life, to forsake his wholesome tent for an insanitary slum, and to send his children to school. If the Board School system is turning out a failure for our little peasants, what can we say for it when it claims the gipsy? The gipsy child simply cannot assimilate book-learning. He goes in sharp as a needle, cunning as a fox, sagacious with ancient woodland lore, long-sighted, keen of ear and scent; he comes out stupid, blear-eyed, often slightly deaf. The new knowledge drops away from him in a month; the old has been stamped out. You have made of him a lazy good-for-nothing, liable to colds and ailments hitherto unknown.

One rainy winter day I met a gipsy friend of mine and stopped to buy a brush. A little girl of eleven was helping to carry the basket; the wet and mud were squishing out of the poor child's boots, from the burst sides of which a sopped rag of stocking

was exuding. I suggested that bare feet would be safer. "True it is, my lady, and full well I know it, but what can I do? 'Tis the schoolalities, you see; to school she must go, and I don't like for folks to pass remarks on my children."

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## BEAULIEU, BETWIXT THE WOOD AND THE SEA

Beyond Ladycross, anciently the boundary of the Abbey right of Sanctuary, opens another wide heath stretching every way—high, wind-swept, looking southward to Tennyson's monolith on Beacon Down, eastward to Portsdown Hill. At Hatchett Gate, where a pond with a bit of white paling and some wind-bent pines breaks the monotony, a truly modern note is struck, for close by Mr. Drexel has set up his hangars and his School of Aviation, and on the rare occasions when the wind drops a monoplane may be seen hovering over the waste. Thence the road goes steeply down to the valley through which the Exe finds its way to the sea, and over a jumble of red roofs gleams a broad water, and beyond, on green lawns, rises the old grey Palace House, once the residence of the abbot. This was the fair spot, the *Bellus*







*Locus*, which John, though he loved not monks, chose for the Cistercian Abbey which, in a fit of compunction, he founded in 1204.

It was no life of idle contemplation that the brethren led. On the slopes above they had their vineyards, terraced towards the sun, with a raised causeway to wheel the grapes down to the wine-press, where the crumbling grey walls are still standing. Masons, too, must have been busy building and beautifying the great church, now level with the ground, though the foundations have been carefully traced and marked out. As cultivated land increased, granges were built, of which several remain: St. Leonard's, with its huge barn and portions of its chapel yet standing, Herford, and Sowley Grange over against Sowley pond, once called Colgrim Mere, where there were ironworks. The map in Gilpin's *Picturesque Scenery* shows an opening to the sea at Pitt's Deep where the iron used to be shipped. The rival north soon carried off the trade, but Sowley firebacks may still be picked up in the neighbourhood.

The name Bergery, near Park, denotes a sheepcote, and Bouvery, spelt in the maps Beaufré, is, of course, the ox farm; there is also a Swinesley not far off, so the industries of the monks were many and various. But this busy, peaceful life was all too prosperous, rousing the cupidity of the king in the troubled times

of the Reformation. To justify the spoliation, exaggerated tales of the scandal of sanctuary rights were told, and commissioners came down with their minds made up beforehand. Doubtless it was a matter liable to abuse, but in the rude days of blood feud and swift vengeance it was no bad thing that the Church should be able to stretch a sheltering arm over the criminal. But into all these questions this is no place to enter. Suffice it that the last abbot appointed was a creature of Cromwell's who, with thirty of his monks, was induced to sign a deed of surrender in consideration of a pension. The riches of the stately abbey went into the king's coffers, the domain was conferred on Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, grandfather to that Henry Wriothesley who was the friend of Shakespeare. Through marriage it passed to the Dukedom of Montague, then to that of Buccleuch, in which family it still remains in the person of Lord Montague of Beaulieu.

The whole story may be found in Sir James Fowler's recently published *History of Beaulieu Abbey*, with remarkable illustrations by Mr. F. Fissi, reconstructing from old records the abbey as it must have looked in its living days. The residence has, of course, known many alterations: the old vaulted room of the great gatehouse is now the dining-room of the Palace House, and the fine inner hall also

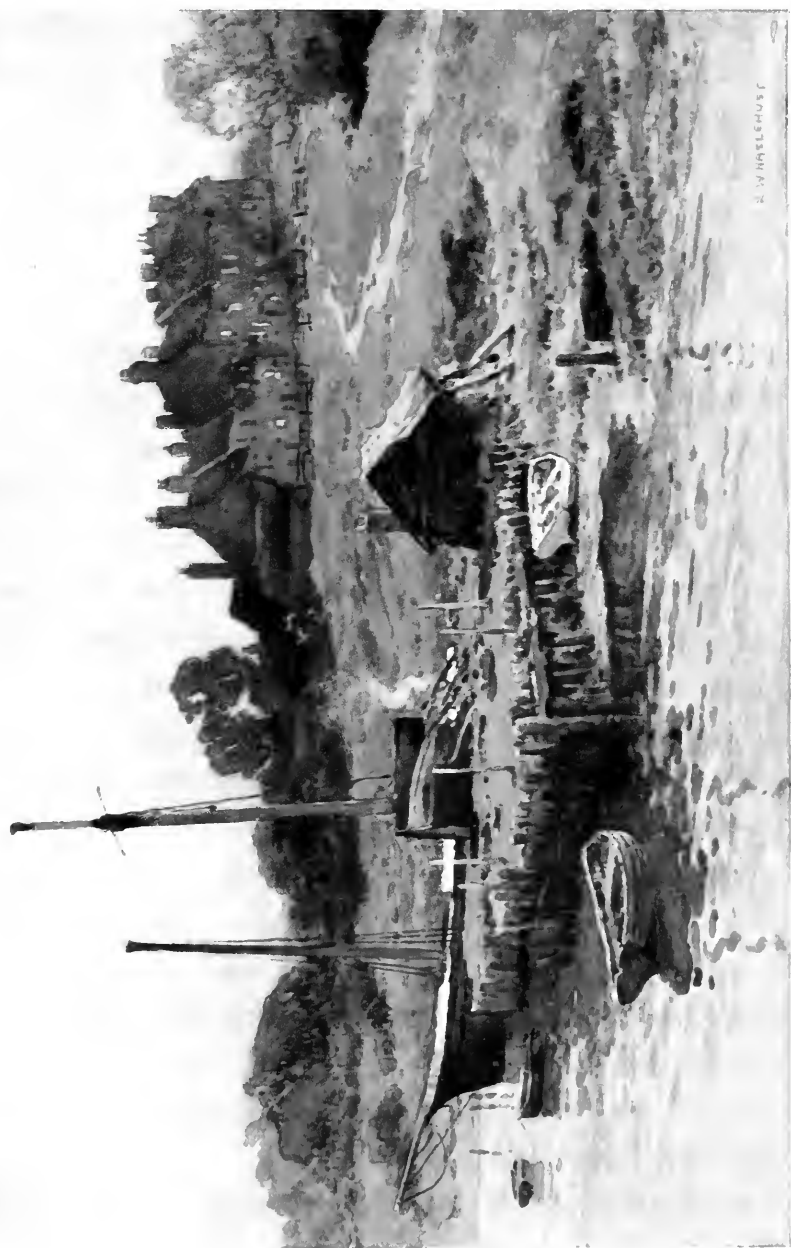
belongs to the original building. On the floor above, what was once the chapel has been converted into a stately drawing-room, panelled probably in Tudor times when it was secularized. Much, of course, has been added at different dates. Not much more than a century ago the last Duke of Montague erected a castellated wall with a moat, fearing the descent of French privateers by the river. The old refectory makes a very lovely little church, the pulpit being the raised desk for the lector, approached by an arcade in the wall. Close by the church, in the shade of a row of lime trees fragrant and murmurous with bees, stands the Domus or Guest House—for hospitality was one of the prime obligations of the monks—now happily restored by Lord Montague and made a place of hospitality once more, the veritable centre of the social life of the village.

About two miles down the river, on the other shore, lies one of the quaintest, most interesting spots in the whole neighbourhood. Coming on it from above, it is almost startling in its oddity. It is hardly a village, just a wide street, grass-grown and asleep, leading down abruptly to queer and unaccountable remains of docks and stays, for this—this little desolate hamlet—was once, and not so long ago either, one of the important dockyards of this great seafaring nation of ours. From this cradle issued the

*Agamemnon*, which carried Nelson at the battle of the Baltic, the *Euryalus* and the *Swiftsure*, which both took part in the fight at Trafalgar. The last Duke of Montague proposed to build a town here and make it a port for the sugar trade with the West Indies, as he owned the island of St. Lucia; but by the Peace of 1748 this was ceded, and his scheme lapsed. The possibilities of the place, and especially the nearness to the Forest for the supply of oak timber, were seized upon by Henry Adams, who set up his shipbuilding yards, and turned out several fine frigates. In 1794 Gilpin writes: "The great number of workmen whom this business brought together, have given birth by degrees to a prosperous village". The end was tragic: Henry Adams was succeeded by his two sons, who carried on the business on the same lines; they were commissioned to build four ships by the Admiralty, and being unable to deliver them at the time agreed, were ruined by fines and litigation. Had this not happened, the business could not long have held its own; as wood was superseded by iron, the advantage of the Forest would have been lost; moreover, there is little doubt that the Exe is gradually silting up as the Lymington river has done.

The good days of Buckler's Hard are over, and no regular ferry plies now between the once busy

BUCKLE'S HARBOR





dockyard and the farther shore; but the chances are the traveller will find an old boatman to put him across and land him under a dense wood, where a group of tall pines rises above a thick growth of oak and beech, and, following the road to the beach, he will come upon a scene typical of the strip of coast that borders the Forest, "betwixt the woods and the sea".

Here is no glory of headland, no fierceness of breaker on the reef, but a wide water, infinitely blue, lapping on the grassy margin where the trees lean over, or lying far out in long, shining lines between the flats—golden, purple, olive brown—where the white gulls stalk and feed—ungainly birds on land—and beyond again, sapphire and amethyst, rise the softly rounded chalk hills of the Island, ending in the milk-white Needles. Far to the left may possibly be discerned a dreadnought or two, just below where the escarpment on Portsdown Hill shows like a white smudge above the harbour.

The stones of the little beach are not worn smooth with the tide, but are loose and rough, held together by sea-holly and yellow horned-poppy and the coarse tawny grass that disputes the land with the seaweed. It is a place to dream in; not this time of the building of ships nor yet of the "White Company", but of long-past days when the Greek merchants used to

come across Gaul from Massilia (Marseilles) and trade with Lepe for tin. A Roman road then crossed the Forest from the port to convey merchandise to the settlements of the Roman Provincials, and William the Norman and his Forest Laws were not yet looming on the horizon.

In Gilpin's day Lepe was "one of the port towns of the Forest, and, as it lies opposite Cowes, the common place of embarkation to the island". He also records the tradition that it was from this remote port that the Dauphin took ship, on the death of John, after his fruitless attempt on the English Crown. And here, also, the unfortunate Charles was brought from Titchfield House on his way to Carisbrooke under the ill-starred guidance of Ashburnham. "Here he was seated in an open boat, and from these shores he bade a last farewell to all his hopes in England."

Well may old Gilpin have averred that this south-east corner holds some of the loveliest bits of forest scenery, for within sight of the sea lies an enchanted wood, hard to find, impossible of access by motor, a place from which the cheap tripper will turn aside with the remark that there is nothing to see. It is true; yet the initiated may not impossibly find that the way through the wood is the way through the ivory gates. For him it holds a charm of restful silence, a



beauty of gleam and gloom, of blue shadow sprinkled with the fairy whiteness of the enchanter's night-shade, of spaces of sunlight lying on the golden bracken, broad ways that must surely lead to the magician's castle, and narrow winding paths that can but have their goal in Elfland.

It is what in these parts we call a holm, a grove of oaks with a thick underwood of hollies grown into weird shapes with frequent cutting. Here and there is an aged thorn which has attained almost the size and girth of a forest tree, and in places Scotch firs lift their stately heads. In their tops the sea-sound murmurs, and about them is the hot fragrance the sun draws out of their resinous branches mingling with the tanny odour of the bracken. An alley through hollies meeting overhead is like a tunnel; it issues on a broad sunny level where four roads meet, each beckoning so enticingly, one is fain to sit down awhile to weigh their claims. One source of the peculiar loveliness of such a holm is that all the ways are green. The grass will flourish under oaks and hollies while it perishes under the beech, and where the fir trees stand, their roots are shrouded in bracken which in summer takes up the tale of greenness, and when October frosts come lights up the ways with gold.

It is a long coppice, and so strangely shaped that

it is possible to make endless wanderings, and even to achieve the losing of one's way, till dusk falls and the owls are hooting to each other from upland to covert, and along the moonlit border of the wood the nightjar is churring with tumbling flight.

One thing only mars the harmony: over against a tumbledown thatched cottage a pert, shallow erection in reddest of red brick and shiniest of slate hideously obtrudes itself on the greenness. Yet the story of it is not without pathos. An old labourer, who had never earned more than fifteen shillings a week, saved and saved till he could buy the old cottage and build the new one in the pride of his heart.

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## LYNDHURST, THE GREENWOOD

Big village or little country town, as it may be regarded, Lyndhurst is not only the centre but the veritable capital of the district; for here, at the top of the steep street, stands the King's House, still the seat of government, and now inhabited by the Deputy Surveyor, who succeeded to the position of the Lord Warden. There is little of the palace of kings about the house, a solid and dignified yet





homely structure standing close upon the pavement. It was built by Charles II on the site of an earlier one where his father often stayed for a few days' sport. It was from here, no doubt, that Charles Louis, the young exiled Elector Palatine, wrote to his mother of accompanying his uncle on a hunting excursion, and dated his letter "Lindust". Of late it has rarely been the residence of royalty. When George III on his way to his beloved Weymouth broke his journey, he was wont to stay at Cuffnells, with its wide park and its glory of rhododendrons, as the guest of Mr. George Rose, the friend of Pitt. But he seems to have honoured the King's House on one occasion.

Adjoining it, but with a separate entrance to the street, is the old Court House, in which for centuries the Swainmote has been held. Still six times a year the Verderers meet the Deputy Surveyor for the adjustment of any differences that may arise between the rights of the Commoners and those of the Crown. It is a fine old hall, though not large, panelled in oak and adorned with antlers. One very curious double pair are interlocked, the two stags having fought and become so entangled that both died of starvation before they were found. There is also an old stirrup iron, assigned traditionally to Rufus, but declared by experts to be not earlier than the time of Henry VIII.

There is an oaken judge's seat and a table round which the Verderers sit like a board meeting, and a very ancient dock, worn shiny with the elbows and shoulders of delinquents—deer-stealers or encroachers.

The church occupies an eminence that should have made for beauty and impressiveness, but fritters away its advantage by a trivial little spire, further diminished in effect by an unmeaning pattern in coloured tiles upon the slate like the trimming on a woman's petticoat.

Lyndhurst stands in the very midst of the greenwood. All around it lies, deep in shade and silence, and, turning aside from the dusty highway, it is still possible to forget the existence of blaring motor or hilarious chars-à-bancs. Through the long green glades one may ramble for a whole summer day without meeting so much as a keeper to ask one's way. As to maps, the highway once left, they are a delusion and a snare, giving paths that lead nowhere, or worse, land the traveller in an impassable morass. The safest rule is, follow the widest; it is sure to bring you out somewhere, if not in the direction you want to go, for the Forest is well intersected with roads. The only other risk is from vipers—especially now "Brusher Mills", the snake-catcher, is no more.

The wanderer, if not a first-rate walker, will do well to mount a pony—a forest pony, be it said; for

they know a bog when they see it, and will not set foot upon its promising but treacherous surface. Moreover, they are immune from the attacks of the maddening forest fly, and if they do not know the way, are at least likely to make a better guess at it than a bicycle. Taking cover just beyond Millyford Bridge from off the hot highroad, and turning through Puckpits to Withybed Bottom, I have sighed for a four-footed beast, especially when presently the only way goes up a steep hill between paltry plantations of young firs, giving not the least modicum of shade, by a track that had been bog in winter, and has become a mass of sun-baked clods. A pony would have picked his way and carried his rider; at least he would not have required to be shoved up the hill by main force, like my unfortunate Lee Francis. Compensation is in store: at the top of the hill a lovely upland opens out, shaded by detached groups of splendid beeches in their prime, with no underwood to obscure the modelling of their grey-green columns. It is unusual to see the ground beneath beech trees a vivid green, since grass will not grow at their roots, but all about was a close-growing bed of bog-myrtle, softer and brighter than bracken in its hue. Beneath the slope, radiant in sunshine, lies a wide misty valley, and beyond it the eye travels to blue heights of down above Win-

chester. The track across the upland would lead to Stonycross, but of this more anon; we must return to the woodland.

The better-known enclosures are those of Mark Ash, Knightwood, and Rhinefield. These are all crossed by practicable roads, and, though full of fine trees and great beauty, seem to have lost something of the indefinable wild-wood charm that haunts the lonelier spots. The excursionist who likes to see something definite will visit the "King of the Forest" and the noted Knightwood Oak, which has had to be fenced round to preserve it from the attentions of its admirers. Across Rhinefield runs the much-visited Ornamental Drive. Heavy Wellingtonias and dark evergreens stand in stiff rows, gloomy without impressiveness, utterly out of keeping with the surroundings. To me the only pleasure connected with it is the sense of escape with which one emerges and finds oneself beneath the beeches at Vinny Ridge, after two miles of drear and dusty formality. For the roadway, instead of being left, like the grassy and well-trodden bridle-paths of the forest, to Nature's keeping, has been ploughed up and cleared of the binding roots and turf without being made into a proper road. Pony-cart or bicycle has to plod its weary way through a foot or two of loose sand in summer, thick mud in winter.



One happy way of exploring these woods is to choose some stream and follow its course as far as may be. Bolderford Bridge over Highland Water is a good starting-point, and begins with Queen's Bower, a very favourite spot. Fine old oaks stand about a lawn round which the brook meanders. In late autumn or early spring I have seen it look very beautiful, but in a parched August, the brook low, the grass worn and burnt, adorned, moreover, with the debris of many a picnic party, it has rather a jaded air. The actual Bower, which the country folk call Queen Anne's, is an almost island formed by a loop of the stream, where a grove of slender ash trees surrounds a sturdy oak. I have not been able to discover what Queen it was connected with, but make no doubt it must have been the golden-haired Danish princess of the nursery game—

"Queen Anne, Queen Anne, she sits in the sun  
As fair as a lily, as white as a swan"—

rather than the homely daughter of Anne Hyde. Moreover, Anne of Denmark and her spouse, James I, both passionately loved sport and pageants, and may well have had some little masque arranged there for their entertainment while staying at the King's House for hunting.

Keeping as close as may be to the stream, the

way leads by a lovely beechen avenue through Briken Wood to issue on the road to Bank, prettiest of suburbs, where the houses stand in an irregular row on the top of a tableland, looking northwards to more woods. But if we cross the road and continue to follow Highland Water, climbing through the woods again, we reach a curious and interesting little bridge, the rough foundations of which, showing at the sides, are said to be Roman work. Leaving the brook at this point, a seductive track will presently emerge in a grove fitly named "The Cathedral". The exceeding loftiness of the beech trees, their noble grouping, and the clear space beneath, have the solemn impressiveness of the aisle of some great sanctuary.

Even to name all the woods that stand round about Lyndhurst, reaching to Burley and Hinchelsey on the one side, to Denny and Ladycross on the other, and northward to Malwood, would exceed the measure of this little book; to describe one-half the beauty would outrun all bounds. For you cannot say that when you have seen one wood you have seen all; each has its own special character, its own individual claim on our affections. Were you dropped out of the skies into the midst of one, you could never confuse Mark Ash with Burley Old Wood, Setthorns with Queen's Bower, nor any one of them



"THE CATHEDRAL"



with Wood Fidley. This last had always been to me a kind of mythical land—the place where they brewed the rain—for in these parts when a cold torrent lashes our eastern windows, we remark, as we throw a fresh peat on the fire, “It is a Wood Fidley rain; it will last all to-day and all to-morrow”. So one day I resolved to go and find it. Being the arid summer of 1911, I need hardly say they were not brewing any that day. Golden sunshine bathed the slopes, planted with Scotch fir, all irregular in chance groups or singly, mingled with silver birch, and it made a harmony in gold and silver and bronze, for the bracken was turning already.

It seems a pity that most of those who come from afar should see the New Forest under its least gracious aspect. Unluckily the holiday time is late summer, just when the full, heavy leafage takes on its most monotonous green, dim and jaded after a dry season, gloomy in a wet one; when flowers are few and birds are silent. In October the early frosts will light up the woods with a rich medley of hues, ending in the exquisite tracery of bare boughs. November has its special beauty when the blue mists lurk in the depth of woodland ways, when the wet bracken glows like a peat fire, and toadstools of weird and wondrous colours adorn the damp wayside. And lovely are the rare days when the moor

lies sheeted with snow, and every spray is set with diamonds. Presently in February comes a moment when a purple flush, like the bloom on a ripe plum, steals over the massed woodland, though yet no green leaf shows, and we know that life begins to stir. On the sheltered banks snowdrops are piercing the dark mould, and soon the early primroses peep out under last year's dead leaves, and daffodils toss their golden heads in the pasture. So the unfolding goes on till the "brief twenty days" of Faber's poem, when every tree is clad in its own fresh raiment, no two alike, and scattered snow of bird cherry or sloe and rosy flush of crab-apple lights up the dark thickets. Now the primroses are poured out with a lavish hand, and the green glades are turned into rivers of blue where the tall wild hyacinths stand massed together in a sheet of amethyst and sapphire mingled; for their changeful hue has the blue of mountains rather than of sky. But the glory of spring flowers belongs to the coppices about Brockenhurst and Beaulieu; Lyndhurst's proud woods have none.

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## THE HIGHROADS AND THE PLAYGROUNDS

To learn the Forest in its true inwardness we have left the king's highway, we have crossed wide moors and marshy bottoms, we have plunged through the greenwood and followed brooks by tangled, muddy tracks. Now for a little we must accompany the ordinary tourist as from his motor or his seat of vantage on a Bournemouth brake he surveys the fringe of the Forest at his ease.

Fine roads cross it in almost every direction, and about them cluster the well-known spots which are the usual goal of the visitor, and may be called the playgrounds. One of the principal routes, which arrogates the title of the Forest Road, leads transversely by some of the most notable points, from Southampton to Bournemouth. Entering the Forest at Colbury near Eling, it crosses the line at Lyndhurst Road railway station, and thousands who think they know the Forest have only dipped into it at this point. For here lies the favourite ground for school treats. Quite close to the station is a wide grassy lawn with great beech trees and shady oaks, where

I can remember seeing the wild pigs nosing about for acorns and beechmast. Now through July and August the lawns are dotted with childish cricketers, and crowds of little folk trot about with mugs slung round their necks. The strong oak branches lend themselves to swings, and the thickets farther down suggest "I spy!" One does not grudge it them; for what a comfort it must be for the teachers to collect and count their little flock so close to the station without risk of losing some adventurous spirit in the enticement of long Forest rides!

Early in December the purlieus of the station are piled with scarlet-berried holly in stacks, awaiting transport to London. This is one of the recognized Forest industries. Licences to cut are issued to certain gipsies and foresters, happily under limitations; they are not permitted to cut at discretion, or the holms would soon be cleared for the insatiable London market.

At Lyndhurst the road divides, the main portion going by Bank, high raised above the road, looking down through the shade of spreading oaks, not too thickly planted. Having paid his duty to the Knightwood oak, the tourist will probably visit the Ornamental Drive, unless he prefer to go through Mark Ash and Bolderwood to the more northerly road to Ringwood. The Bournemouth road, passing between





IN WATFORD WOOD



the beautiful beeches of Vinny Ridge and Burley Old Wood, crosses Longslade Bottom by Markway Bridge over the Black Water and climbs the hill to Wilverley Post, whence descending by Holmsley and Hinton, at the "Cat and Fiddle", it issues from the Forest.

The other branch goes due south to Lymington, and from the top of Clay Hill becomes exceedingly beautiful, wide lawns on each side separating it from the greenwood, dense on the east and sufficiently sparse on the west to let the setting sun filter through. Dim with motor dust the summer through, it is lovely in May in its fresh green, the great hawthorns by the wayside clad like brides. At Holland Wood and Balmer Lawn more school feasts and choir outings dot the ground. The wide shady spaces afford room for games, and are near enough to Brockenhurst station to be easy of access.

The time to see Balmer Lawn at its fairest is on a winter morning when the foxhounds meet at Brockenhurst Bridge. On the slope above the river the men in pink on their fine mounts, not a few women, some riding in the new fashion in topboots, breeches, and frockcoats, the hounds crowding round the whip with their tails carried like scimitars, all grouped against a background of frosted trees and pale-blue sky, make up an oldfashioned hunting picture.

Straight on goes the road by the level crossing, avoiding Brockenhurst village, up Tilebarn hill, coming out on Setley Plain. Here on the height, where the Burley Road branches off, is an interesting spot long called Cobbler's Corner. In old days it was Hobler's Corner, for here dwelt the Hobler, the man whose duty it was to scan the distant line of the Isle of Wight for the flare of the Beacon, and, catching sight of it, to mount and ride posthaste to Burley Beacon, whence the news—whether of approach of Armada or of a French invasion—should be flashed to Bramshaw, thence to the Old Telegraph above Winchester, and so to London.

From Battramsley Cross the road descends by shady trees, and at the bottom of Passford Hill, where the brook forms the Forest boundary, there is an avenue of oaks and beeches, raised on a bank, worthy to rank with the "Gate of the Forest" at the northern border on the Salisbury Road.

The next important road leads from Romsey to Ringwood, entering the Forest at Cadnam. A little to the south Minstead straggles along a by-road in as yet unspoilt picturesqueness, though the inn has been rebuilt to meet the needs of the many visitors to the neighbouring Rufus' Stone. It still displays its ancient sign of the "Trusty Servant", copied from the wall of the kitchen at Winchester College.

The delightful little church is the most perfect survival of those in which our forefathers worshipped from the eighteenth century down to the time of the Oxford Movement. It would be nothing short of deplorable were the hand of the restorer to be laid upon it. It abounds in galleries, one double-tiered, and has a regular three-decker, with the clerk's seat at the bottom. Its prime glory, however, is the squire's pew, with a fireplace and easy chairs, railed round with curtains, and possessing a separate entrance, so that these high persons can go to church without mixing with the common herd. Long may it be preserved in its integrity that we may not quite forget one phase of our religious history.

Returning to the main road, we find the Compton Arms at Stony Cross, where the coaches stop and set down their trippers, who descend the steep hill afoot to the spot where Rufus fell. Here again the scientific historian has been busy; but far be it from me to throw any doubt upon the tale. Standing beside the stone in the hideous iron casing rendered necessary by the pocket knives of its admirers, one cannot but feel some indignation against those who would explain it all away. They are as bad as the visitors who would have whittled the stone to nothing—and with less excuse. Walter Tyrell has already been whitewashed; soon the share of Rufus himself

will be eliminated, and we shall be told there was no corpse to be carried bleeding to Winchester on the charcoal burner's cart. For my own part, whether it were plot of churchmen, private vengeance, or the deed of Saxon churls dispossessed of their rights, I doubt not that Wat Tyrell's hand sped the fatal shaft, whether by design or misadventure, while the king stood shading his eyes from the westering sun.

Then, seeing what he had done, the slayer mounted and, urging his breathless horse up that steep hill, rode for Ringwood for all he was worth. Else why did he terrorize the blacksmith at the ford, since known as Tyrell's, and make him shoe his horse backward to confuse the traces of his flight, and then kill the man? Dead men tell no tales, but there must have been tales to be told. And if he did none of these things, why does that forge pay a yearly fine to the Crown to this day for compounding a felony? A matter which is recorded in Wise's *History*.

All the summer through the cheap tripper in hordes is deposited beside the historic stone. He gazes at it, and finding he can neither carve his name nor chip off a corner, he turns away, buys a postcard view in colours, and seeks more congenial amusement in the cocoanut shies hard by.

Leaving Stony Cross, the road runs by Bushy Bratley along the lofty ridge that forms the back-



MINSTEAD CHURCH





bone of the Forest to Picked Post and down to the Avon valley. The northernmost road follows the Wiltshire border, running from Bramshaw to Fordingbridge, lonesome exceedingly and bleak, but commanding a magnificent outlook to Beacon Hill and Salisbury spire on the one hand, and over the slopes of Ashley Walk on the other. The spot where the Salisbury road enters the Forest at Nomansland is marked by an archway of fine old oaks known as "the Gate of the Forest".

Of all the many crossroads, with all their separate charms, which connect these main arteries with each other, I have no space to tell. Those who have time to linger will find they must make many a day's journey to learn them all. We must leave them now and dive once more into wood and moorland.

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## BRAMSHAW, THE HILL COUNTRY

The wildest and loneliest, if not the most beautiful part of the Forest is to be found in the north-west, where a hilly tract lies between the road from Cadnam to Picked Post and that from Nomansland to Fordingbridge, and stretches westward from Bramshaw

to the rampart of high down which parts the Forest from the Avon valley. Here there are no crossroads to break it up; only bridle-paths or rough cart tracks, often impassable in winter by reason of bogs, connect the lonely Forest lodges with each other.

And what variety is here! From dense woods, hushed in noonday stillness, the wayfarer emerges on some unexpected crest, looking clear away over the Wiltshire Downs. By some sudden slope from a long, bleak, drear ridge he comes upon a still, dark pool with swans sailing on it. A little lonely hamlet has sprung up at the edge of the pond, and a modern gunpowder factory, put here to be well out of the way of the public—as indeed it is.

Transversely run two valleys with their streams, Latchmore Brook to make its way between the downs under Gorley Hill, and Docken Water, widening as it flows through the marshy bottom, till it joins the Avon at Moyles Court. Coming down the broken upland through Broomy by winding ways and chalky ledges, at dusk one may see a little troop of deer stooping their branchy heads to drink at the brook by Holly Hatch, here called Broomy Water. Here one may well fancy the colt-pixy the old tales tell of, light-stepping with waving mane and tail, “in the likeness of a filly foal”, luring the horses into

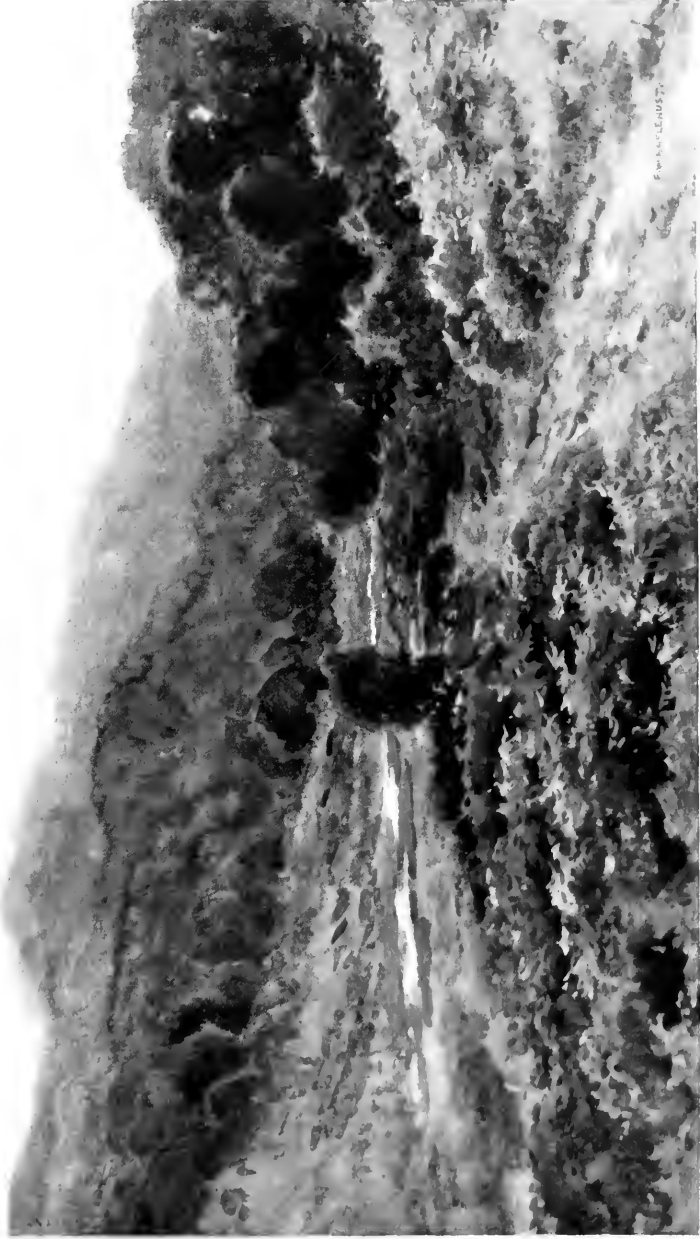
the bog that spreads from the stream up to the slopes of Ibsley Common.

From Brook, lying in a wooded hollow on the Forest border, the road goes steeply up to Bramshaw, an unspoilt village, not grouped about its church as an orderly village should be, but squandered all along a mile or more of road between that and the post office. The little sanctuary stands, as all the Forest churches do, raised upon a mound, and is approached by a flight of steps so long and steep as to make the tired wayfarer think of the ascent to some shrine in a Catholic country, and wonder how much indulgence is due to him for his climb. The quaint building has lost much of the charm that makes Minstead so gracious. It has been to some extent brought up to date, and further penance is imposed on the worshipper by new open sittings, hideous to the eye, cruel to the back. Once, before a readjustment of boundaries, it had the fascinating peculiarity of its nave being in Wiltshire and its chancel in Hampshire.

The church passed, the road leads on through the loveliest of beechwoods on Bramble Hill. He would be a strange traveller who would not forsake the dusty highway and plunge into the cool tangled glades till all sense of direction is lost. For the special and peculiar beauty of this, unlike most Forest enclosures,

is that there are no straight rides cutting it transversely, but the winding alleys seem of Nature's own planting, and these make it easy to stray, one fair group of noble trees after another beckoning along the wide green ways into the heart of the wood. One may fancy one is following the direction of the road, but it is far out of sight in a few minutes. Never mind! Every path must lead somewhither, and, sticking faithfully to one, we presently emerge upon a high, wide plateau, whence the eye may travel to Salisbury spire on the one hand and to the downs above Winchester on the other, though its low-lying cathedral is lost in their folds. From here one can see the Beacon on Dean Hill and the Old Telegraph on Longwood Warren, whence Bramshaw Telegraph close by would take its signal and hand it on to Burley Beacon.

On the edge of the level stands a little inn, and nearer the wood cocoanut shies and Aunt Sallies are set up for the delectation of the Salisbury and Southampton trippers. But we are soon away from such disturbing elements. A desperate clamber up the stoniest of hills leads to the ridge that divides the two counties. It is curious to observe that here the moorland seems to be laid on quite different lines to those in the south part of the Forest, partaking more of the nature of the Wiltshire Downs. This



BY BROOKLYN WATER



road must be desolate and drear enough in winter, but it commands even finer views than the vaunted ones at Picked Post. Following it over Deadman's Hill, the sweeps of Ashley Walk slope steeply down to Amberwood and Island Thorns.

Southward of these lies Sloden, which possesses special points of interest. Along its fence, beds of nettles interrupt the bracken, and where these occur a little grubbing may unearth some shards of Roman pottery. This is said by experts to denote a regular factory of earthenware, since the bits are too numerous and too invariably broken to be the ordinary debris of a household, but must be the waste product of the potter's wheel. Once, also, there existed here a grove of noble yews, and of these some yet remain. One remarkable ring of eleven together hint at what they were in their glory, and just outside the enclosure a striking semicircle of half a dozen, standing round some oaks, are better seen in the open. Density and solitude are the chief characteristics of Sloden Wood. Here in its depth the ponies can find a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, more imperious than many a stable. Here, too, the hind may bring forth her young and discover the thick bushes. For this is the special haunt of the fallow deer, and, resting quiet in the shade, one may chance to see a little company of the graceful, stately creatures

pass slowly, with dainty footsteps, across a glade at no great distance—provided, that is, one has taken up a position to leeward, for if the breeze bore a taint of human breath, the shy, wild things would be gone like a flash. Less stately and less fierce than the red deer, they are hardly less beautiful in their dun coats, palely spotted, and the little fawns are exquisite. Legally the stag no longer exists, but some may yet be found in these wilder coverts, either they have lingered on or have wandered down from Cranbourne Chace, and they afford a finer day's sport.

People talk rather loosely of the "wild" creatures of the Forest, including in the phrase the ponies and the pigs; but in truth nothing larger than a fox or a badger is really wild in the sense that lions and tigers in the jungle are—that is, masterless. The deer are the property of the Crown, and as to the rough, shaggy, hammer-headed ponies, though they roam at large day in, day out, winter and summer, and find their own subsistence, their notched tails mark them as belonging to some forester with grazing rights. At one time stallions were turned loose in the Forest to improve the breed, but these were Crown property, and now neither they nor bulls are allowed at large, and boar have ceased to exist. The pigs certainly all belong to the cottagers, and are now no longer seen in big flocks at pannage, that



is from 22 September till 25 November. There is a charming account in one of Mr. Gilpin's volumes of the swineherd who used to take charge of all the pigs of a large district during this season, giving them warm food and shelter at night, so that they would collect from their wide wanderings at the sound of his pipe. The breed of pigs which was indigenous to the Forest has now died out—probably the make did not lend itself to good hams. Gilpin thus describes them: "Besides these (the domestic pigs) there are others in the more desolate parts of the Forest, bred wild and left to themselves, descendants of the wild boar imported by Charles I from Germany (probably at the suggestion of his nephew, the Elector Palatine). They had broad shoulders, high crest, bristly mane, the hinder parts light, and they were fiercer than the common breed." Writing some fifty years later, Wise alludes to their shaggy coats, brindled and rust colour, and I myself can remember them as he describes them.

By Fritham and Sloden are some of the most noteworthy of those mysterious barrows, locally called butts, which have exercised the curiosity of antiquaries. Others are found across the valley, on the heights by Bushy Bratley, and there are several on Setley Plain. Wise in his *History* gives a very full and interesting account of the opening of some of these

tumuli both by himself and by Warner, who wrote on *The South-western Parts of Hampshire*. Invariably there was found burnt earth and charcoal, together with calcined human remains, in some cases contained in urns of "rude forms and large size", which led him to the conclusion that they are the funeral pyres of the ancient Britons, probably long anterior to the Roman Invasion. The hints they give of life in the Forest in far-past days are indeed scanty, but their presence, standing age-long on remote uplands, suggests strange visions of the long succession of races that have dwelt here.

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## BURLEY, THE WESTERN BORDER

The western border of the New Forest is a great contrast to the eastern. Towards Southampton Water the boundary is an arbitrary one—the farms and woodlands on the one hand are much the same as on the other—but on the west a natural rampart divides the wild down country from the Avon valley, along which an elm-shaded road connects a chain of pretty villages. From the height of Godshill and Windmill Hill on the north the ridge runs southward by Hydes Common

through the two Gorleys, by Ibsley, sloping away to Latchmoor Bottom, till it reaches Mockbeggar, an oddly named hamlet nestling in the downs. On the one side are rugged uplands, on the other smiling villages, elm trees, and orchards of red apples—for this is a fine cider country.

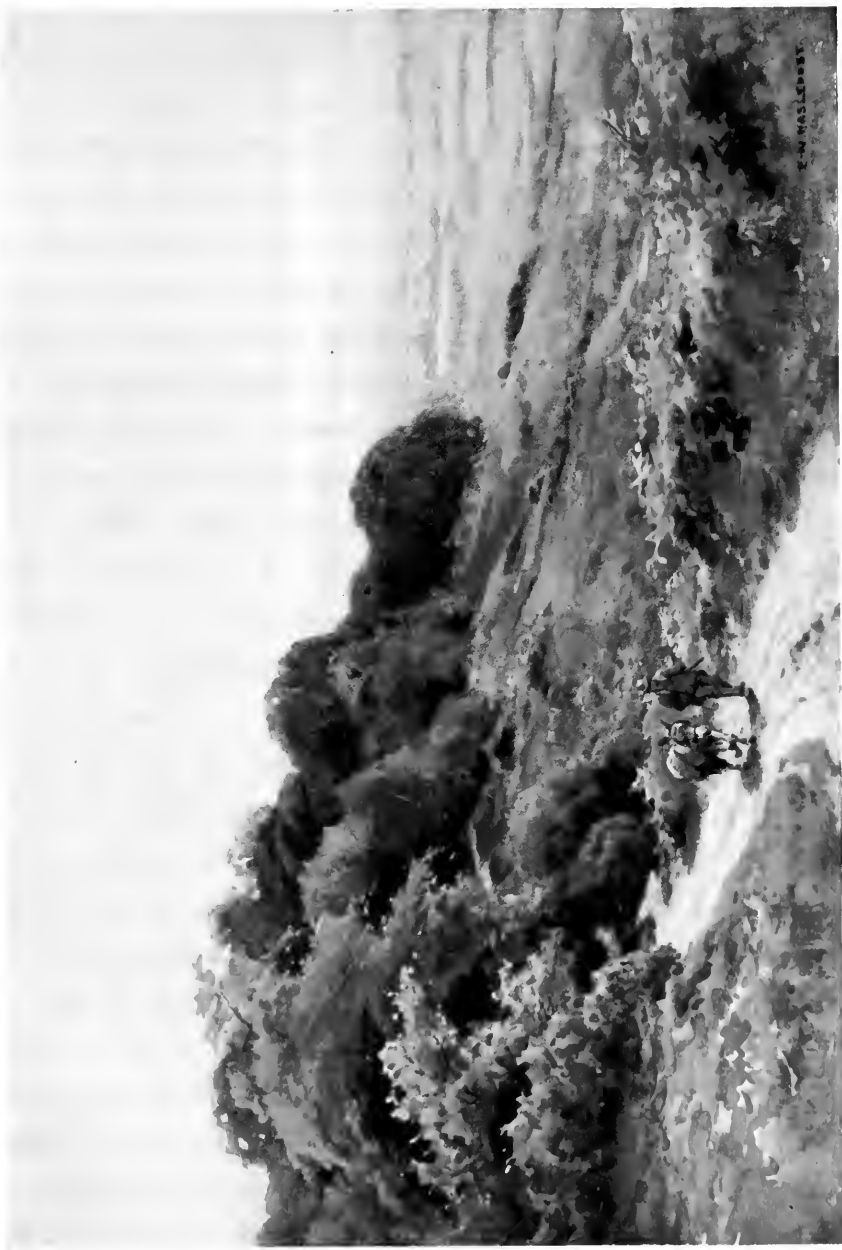
At Moyles Court the downs break off to let Docken Water through to meet the Avon. It is a fine old house, interesting as having been the home of Lady Alice Lisle, the innocent victim of her charity to Monmouth's defeated soldiers, though she, unlike Mrs. Knapton of Lymington, was in no way implicated in the rebellion. Hard by stands an oak which should have been the prime glory of the Forest; for it is finer than any within its present precincts.

After the ford the hills rise again steeply to Picked Post, a high point which looks across the intervening forest, over wood beyond wood, to Bramshaw Telegraph, a hundred feet higher still. From here by Bushy Bratley extends a lofty plateau right away to Stony Cross, over which roam multitudes of Forest ponies, and on a hot noonday it is a curious sight to see a drove of them gathered together on an open spot, locally called a "shade"—apparently from the absence of anything of the sort—standing close in a circle, heads inward, waving tails outward, to defend

them from the Forest fly. The cows do the same thing, but they keep to themselves.

A little to the south Burley lies in a dip between the hills, sheltered yet high. Its fine position has been the destruction of its charm, for it has attracted too many residents, who have cut up the surrounding oak groves with up-to-date "artistic" houses, and brought the usual train of shops, motor garages, and civilization generally to mar the village street. Unfortunately some years ago the owner of Burley Manor found himself obliged to part with much of the land, which was developed for building, with disastrous effect, especially at Burley Lawn, which might really pass for a suburb of Clapham Common. The church does nothing to redeem it. It is a mean little structure, belonging to the worst period of ecclesiastical architecture, when three lancet windows at the east end were considered the acme of good taste.

An interesting feature is the annual pony fair. There is one also at Swan Green, by Lyndhurst, and another at Brockenhurst, but that at Burley is the best, affording more space. The one at Brockenhurst, where the ponies are penned into a dirty yard by the station, has little charm for a looker on. At Burley one can see their paces tried over the open lawn, and great and smart is the concourse of horse-men, carriages, and motors. A still more interesting





business, but one not so easily seen, is the gathering them in from the Forest. Men on clever, well-trained ponies go out, armed with long stock whips, driving the startled creatures together, often into bogs to secure them.

Westward and southward towards Holmsley the moor is broken into heights and hollows, giving a magnificently varied outline, and diversified with wooded enclosures on the lower slopes. Here the fallow deer may often be met with, though the red hardly come so far south. Wilverley Post, at the crossroad, is a favourite spot for deerhound meets as well as foxhound, and the coverts to the north-west are seldom drawn in vain. Eastward slopes of broken ground, lightly wooded and dotted with clumps of thorn, tangled in honeysuckle and bramble, lead down to the chain of woods towards Lyndhurst. One of the most beautiful of these is Burley Old Wood. This still keeps many of its fine old oaks, besides magnificent beeches, and there is more variety than in most of the enclosures, for besides these there are ash, chestnut, and hornbeam, mingled with the dainty elegance of the silver birch; some yews, too, as large and old as any at Sloden. So fine is the grouping, that even on a grey day of drizzling rain, with none of the dappling sun and shadow that lend such a charm to woodland ways, it lost nothing of its magic.

To pass through the gate into Burley New Enclosure is like a sudden step from a mediæval city into a modern industrial suburb. The trees are in straight, ruled lines, too thick-set to admit of fair growth, and gladly we extricate ourselves and, returning by the raised causeway that crosses the stretch of bog at Longslade Bottom by Markway Bridge, we regain the highroad at Wilverley Post.

Opposite Wilverley stands the blasted tree known as the Naked Man, holding up its bleached, appealing arms to heaven, now welcomed as a signpost rather than shunned as a bogey. A little beyond is Setthorns, with a small, lonely keeper's lodge at the edge of it. This wood must have been very lovely before the intrusion of the railway that now cuts across it, and indeed still has great charm. In Mr. Gilpin's day it had been recently cleared of its fine oaks, and bitter are his lamentations over their disappearance and that of the grove of yews that flourished below. But he wrote more than a century ago, and since then the wood has been replanted—happily before the new fashion of straight rows of young trees, like a cabbage garden, had come in. One of the most entrancing of bridle-paths enters the road just below the railway bridge and, passing down by a steep descent, emerges on the Avon Water—not to be confounded with the



river Avon—which here broadens into a pool. The stream passes under Meadend Bridge, which forms the Forest boundary at this point, and flows on to join the sea at Keyhaven.

Sway, once the most picturesque of villages, perched on its high common, is now nearly overwhelmed with red brick and vulgarity, probably consequent on its possession of a railway station. It is only partly within the Forest bounds. From here a road running by a ridge of down leads to Shirley Holms, one of those primeval patches of oak and holly, clear of undergrowth, that are specially beloved of the gipsies for close overhead shelter and clear space beneath for tent and fire. This road comes out on the main highway at Battamsley Cross; but if the objective be Brockenhurst, a better way is to turn at Marlpit Oak and go down by Latchmoor (or -mere), the pool of corpses. This ill-omened name belongs to some great battle of long ago, but a dark tradition of last century still hangs about the spot.

By Marlpit Oak, a lofty landmark on the bare heath, beloved of deer-stealers in the old poaching days, with a dense thicket round about its knees, good to hide in, there lurked one night three men of the outlaw type who used to haunt the Forest. They were lying in wait for a traveller known to be returning to his home with a large sum of money.

Though they were three to one, he showed fight; so they murdered him and dragged his body down to Latchmoor, where they threw it into the pool. Across the moor at Setley stood a little inn of evil repute, called the "Three Feathers" or the "Three Pigeons", or some such name. Here they called for drinks, threw their money about freely, and bragged in their cups; so they were taken and hanged at Marlpit Oak. The bodies, hanging in chains, have mouldered into dust, the gallows tree no longer adorns the spot where now the cheery foxhounds meet on many a winter morning; but it was some time before the inn recovered from its evil savour. People would call it the "Three Murderers"; so at last it had to be pulled down, rebuilt, and rechristened as the "Oddfellows Arms", under which title it has become a respectable wayside hostelry.

And now we find ourselves again at Setley by Brockenhurst, our brief survey done—a few characteristic spots gleaned, yet more, I fear, left out than included. We may be thankful for so much old-world beauty still spared, yet are we not without a haunting sense of menace. Though the Forest has been rescued from the utilitarian destruction that once threatened it, it has more insidious foes. All Forest lovers are dismayed at the advance of the Scotch fir, which encroaches ever more and more,

and bids fair to swamp the whole woodland. There are only two valid reasons for planting a tree of such small value. One is the need for shelter for wood better than itself on the windy uplands; but then the firs should be weeded out as the timber grows strong enough to hold its own. Another thing is that, being a thirsty soul, it will quickly reclaim marshy land. But this in itself would be matter of regret to the lovers of wild nature, for the bogs have their special bird and plant life. It is hard to see why so much space should be sacrificed to stiff, straight rows of firs so densely planted that none can reach perfection or attain their one beauty of broad, spreading heads. Perhaps small profits with quick returns appeal to a generation that plants for itself. We no longer plant timber for posterity, as did our forefathers.

The new fashion of excessive game-preserving, which is practised on the manors though not in the Forest itself, is answerable for the destruction of much wild life. The keepers wage war on jay and magpie, owl and hawk, and even the little harmless squirrel has been so diminished in the last year or two, that you may take many a long ramble through the woods and never once hear his chatter or watch his nimble spring from tree to tree. A powerful plea for a sanctuary comes from the pen of E. W., the writer of a series of delightful articles on "Out of

Doors," in the *Hampshire Chronicle*. After deploring the utter extinction of many bird species and increasing rarity of others, she goes on:

"What we want is a sanctuary, and a sanctuary of great extent near the South Coast; the New Forest is ready to our hand and requires no making—wood and water, sea and moor, all are there. We also need, when we have got our ideal sanctuary, an army of keepers who shall be as anxious to keep alive, as the keepers of the present time are anxious to kill."

But the worst enemy of the Forest is its admirer. He comes, falls in love with it, craves a house within its borders, praises it to his friends, and invites them down. So the fashion comes, and the fashion creates a demand. Land rises to a fancy value, and when times are so hard for the landowners, what can they do but relinquish their fairest sites to the speculative builder? If this goes on, our descendants may wonder why we cared so much for an endless firwood, diversified with "artistic" villas—or perhaps they will like it. In the country that lies East of the Sun and West of the Moon they would doubtless pass a law that all manors within the Forest, coming into the market, should be resumed by the Crown and enclosed as wood or waste for ever.

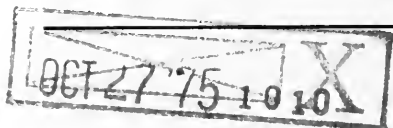


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